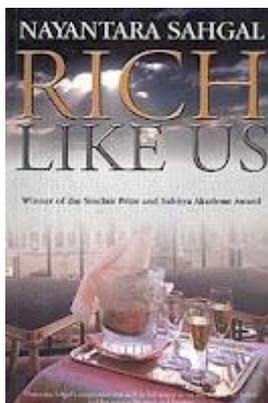


Glimpses of Emotional Intelligence in *Rich Like Us*

Tissaa Tony C., M.A., B.Ed., M.Phil.

=====
Language in India www.languageinindia.com ISSN 1930-2940 Vol. 13:10 October 2013
=====



Abstract

The theory of Emotional Intelligence propagated by John Mayor and Peter Salovey analyses the emotional Intelligence of a person from four perspectives, namely, Perceiving emotions, Facilitating thought, Understanding emotions and Managing emotions. I have made an attempt to study Nayantara Sahgal's *Rich Like Us* from the above perspectives and to portray the various emotions revealed and its impact on each character's life in this paper .

Authentic Depiction

Nayantara Sahgal's novels primarily deal with the complex human relationships and also depict the contemporary society with much authenticity. Thereby, adding a new dimension to Indian Writing in English. Her novels always have a nationalistic fervour. *Rich Like Us* published in 1985 won Sinclair Prize for fiction and the Sahitya Akademi Award. Mrs.Sahgal has the honour of being the first Indian woman novelist writing in English dealing with political theme. I intend to make a study of Nayantara Sahgal's *Rich Like Us* based on the theory of Emotional Intelligence.

Language in India www.languageinindia.com ISSN 1930-2940 13:10 October 2013

Tissaa Tony C., M.A., B.Ed., M.Phil.

Glimpses of Emotional Intelligence in *Rich Like Us*

The Theory of *Emotional Intelligence*

The theory of *Emotional Intelligence* was proposed by John Mayor and Peter Salovey in the year 1995. This theory is an eye-opener to all who believe intelligence is what makes a person successful, but the theory of Emotional Intelligence states that only when the heart and the brain works in unison real success can be achieved. Otherwise success and achievement on one realm may be marred by the failure in the most important realm of relationships. It is very unfortunate to say that in this nuclear era where even nano particles can be deciphered we are yet to find an answer to the problems arising due to the lack of understanding in relationships. This paper is an attempt to look at the various problems confronted by the protagonist in this novel and how Emotional Intelligence helps them tide over the crisis in life.

Emotional Intelligence represents the ability to perceive, appraise and express emotions accurately and adoptively; the ability to understand emotion and emotional knowledge; the ability to access or generate feelings when they facilitate cognitive activities or adaptive action; and the ability to regulate emotion in oneself or others (Mayor and Salovey, 1997)

These four traits of Emotional Intelligence can be illustrated as four abilities which can be defined as follows:

Identifying Emotions -The ability to recognize how you and those around you feel

Using Emotions - The ability to generate an emotion, and then reason this emotion.

Understanding Emotions - The ability to understand complex emotions and emotional "chains", transition of emotions from one stage to another.

Managing Emotions - The ability which allows you to manage emotions in yourself and in others.

Focus on a controversial Moment in Modern Indian History

Rich Like Us is a novel about the emergency period (1975-1977), a controversial moment in Indian Politics. This novel deals with the political upheaval, suspension of civic rights by the ruling government, nepotism and illegal businesses benefiting the elite few. In such a scenario, there is a multitude of emotions revealed by several characters. In the novels of Sahgal social and political themes are inter-related. One depends on the other to make the novel more meaningful and readable. The elements of suspense and the fear of turmoil are seen throughout the novel. Each character's level of emotional intelligence and how it helps them in life forms the subject of study in this paper. There are different emotions revealed by the various characters. On one hand, we find men amassing wealth using all unscrupulous means. On the other hand, the poor and illiterate masses struggling to make ends meet. The poor are unaware of the crafty policies of the greedy politicians. The author's patriotic feelings for the country and its people, is revealed through realistic portrayal of the state of affairs during the emergency period. This work is an attempt to make an in depth study of the emotions and its impact on the people connected.

Indira Gandhi was found guilty of campaign malpractice by the Allahabad High Court. This conviction made her ineligible for "*running for or holding any elective office for a period of six years*" (*Rich Like Us*, 142). Opposition parties and press demanded the resignation of the Prime minister. Leaders of the opposition were arrested, and the Prime Minister declared Emergency on the dawn of 26th June 1975. By the 28rd and 29th amendments made to the constitution which exonerated her from impending legal charges and made her immune to arrests. This amendment was declared to be immune from Supreme

Language in India www.languageinindia.com ISSN 1930-2940 13:10 October 2013

Tissaa Tony C., M.A., B.Ed., M.Phil.

Glimpses of Emotional Intelligence in *Rich Like Us*

Court review. The Emergency period was a scheme devised to hide the allegations and continue the rule. The quote here will throw light on how a democracy was converted into a dictatorship at the behest of the Prime Minister. “The country had been in a mess, people screaming for more wages or bonus, or just screaming, too many political parties, so humiliating to explain to foreigners. And then overnight a magical calm had descended like in Taiwan or Singapore. The idea of a leader, someone to look up to...fulfilled a yearning for tidiness, and a woman in command put at least one woman beyond the furies all others face. And then the Emergency was so popular.” (*Rich Like Us*, 87). Here a woman who controls the affairs of an entire nation is portrayed with much dexterity. A woman, who faces all opposition with iron hand, silences every enemy by making amends to the law of the land. The portrayal of the Prime Minister of the country despite the flaws in the character shows how empowered a few women are, whereas other womenfolk are oppressed and victimised. An overt contrast can be found in the treatment of women in the land where women were once venerated as goddesses or Devi's. When a study is made into why some are able to rule and others are ruled, the answer is the difference in the level of Emotional Intelligence, the successful women are able to understand the emotions of others as well as themselves. They are not immersed in self pity, they take charge over the circumstance and tide over the crisis. As this novel is simply not a work of fiction it is based on the true event in the post colonial India and its author is the member who belongs to the first family of India's political dynasty. The facts provided are very authentic and the inference made from true incidents will also be very useful for improving one's level of Emotional Intelligence.

The Woman Characters in *Rich Like Us*

The women characters in Sahgal's novel generally possess an impetus to discover and assert their individuality which is one of the important traits of an Emotionally Intelligent individual. One such character is Sonali, who is an upright officer in the civil services. Sonali

is an honest officer of the Indian Administrative Service, works for the Ministry of Industry. She is a person of grit, integrity and self-determination. Sonali stands apart from the usual stereotyped visions of Indian womanhood. The author looks at life from two perspectives one as the omniscient author and the other through the voice of Sonali. She is instrumental in poignantly reconstructing the past through the monologues. She is a very strong character, who decides to swim against the current. She refuses to give up her ideals and values even when her survival is under question. But she is astonished by the switch over that her childhood friend Ravi Kachru makes from socialism to autocracy. He was a staunch supporter of Marxian Socialism when he was student abroad, but when returns to the motherland, he is quick to grasp the benefits he can derive by supporting the Prime Minister's decision. But he fails to realise that he is myopic in his haste to climb the ladder of success. Sonali's words are quoted "I did admire and envy his commitment, it was so cloudless. But I couldn't understand why we had to keep cutting and pasting Western concepts together and tying ourselves to them forever as if Europe were the centre of the universe, and the Bible and Marx were the last word on mankind." (*Rich Like Us*, 101)

Self-determination of Sonali

Sonali's self-determination is worth admiration. The people around Sonali, their actions and decision bother her to a certain extent. This botheration arises out of the concern she has for the people dear to her. But such botheration's never worried her or made her compromise with her principles. Two instances for this trait of her can be found in the novel. When she sees her friend Bimmie decked up as a bride she is awestruck by her mannerism she says "But I was hypnotized by Bimmie's nose ring, the sandalpaste dots on her face, eyes downcast, and those manacled hands resting submissively in her red silk lap. This was never Bimmie." (RLU, 48). This also speaks of her keen observation of people. She is not only aware of her emotions but she also understands the transformation each person undergoes

according to the demands of the situations. Bimmie's transformation is unbelievable to Sonali who will never change her nature in order to be in the good books of the society. Similarly when Ravi Kachru dances to the tunes of his higher-ups she is taken aback but she never gives up her values just because a staunch supporter of socialism compromises his policy in order to please the Prime Minister. These instances from the novel project Sonali as an Emotionally Intelligent character.

Pride in Possessing Fanciful Goods

Ram is one of the chief characters, who takes pride in possessing fanciful goods like European finery and imported goods. This taste has a symbolic reference to his character, he is extravagant even in possessing wives, in the place of one he has three. One from India(Mona), another from U.K(Rose), another from Europe(Marcella).Moreover he is not keen on building the relationship or understanding the person to he is wedded to, if that had been there he would not made so many quick decisions. He even takes pride in possessing them. Even when Rose seeks for a Divorce he says that the Hindu marriage is sacred and it does not permit a divorce. It is ironical that despite his name being Ram he violates the sanctity of the marriage by not be loyal to his wife. He lacks values and morals and has very trivial and superficial perceptions of things. He is not able to apply his discretion for good and bad. An instance for this can be found when "his fanciful taste for beautiful finery and European goods cause trouble with the inventory of his shop until Rose is able to convince him to look around for more native materials." Wikipedia (plot and summary RLU). Such indecisiveness is also seen in his marital life also. He is carried away by the beauty of one woman after the other. His life is spent in settling the disputes and bickering at the domestic front. This in turn takes a toll on his health and goes to a state of comma which further aggravates the problem he himself had created. Rose feels insecure about her future as she is not his legal wife. His son Dev, who has always seen Rose as an unwelcome member of the

family schemes to put an end to her life and become the sole inheritor of his father's property. Thus the lack of Emotional Intelligence of Ram wrecks havoc in his life. The wealth that he heaped up does not come to his aid; his son is also driven by materialistic ambitions with no moral scruples.

Fear of Loss of Societal Status

Another important facet of the emotions of women is that for fear of loss of societal status and esteem lot of sufferings are hushed up by women. Hence, they become mute spectators of patriarchal domination. Men decide the destiny of women. Rose dreams of romantic life with Ram, but her rosy picture of life is shattered on her arrival to India and sees the first wife of Ram and his son Dev. She cannot go back to her land and her people and shed tears because it was her choice to be the wife of Ram. She pleads to Ram for obtaining a divorce but he refuses and there ends the matter. Such insignificant role in decision making makes the plight of women very miserable.

Victims of Culturally-Sanctioned Male Oppression

When a formal analysis of the novel is made, despite their education, societal status and employment opportunities, women are found to be victims of culturally-sanctioned male oppression. An instance of such an oppression can be seen in the injustice and cruelty meted out to Rose. She marries Ram, but even his name sounds ironical as he does not have one wife but three. Rose commits for a marriage despite knowing that he is already married and has a son. Her love for her husband is unrequited and returned by deceit .He again goes for a third marriage. When she broaches upon divorce he talks about the sanctity of Hindu marriage and says that it can never be broken. She however learns to co-exist with Mona his first wife and her son Dev. There is a lot of rivalry and misunderstanding initially between the two wives, later when they understand that they are the victims of fate, and they have a common oppressor , Ram, their husband. This rivalry gradually paves way for sisterhood.

This kind of awareness of one's own emotions as well as the emotion of a person undergoing the same trauma or tragedy in life is the best proof of emotional intelligence among the women characters in the novel. The women not only understand the cause of their misery but also chalk out strategies to make their turbulent life more peaceful. They come to a realisation that what has happened in their life cannot be rectified but they are still hopeful of a bright future. The virtuousness of these women can be understood by the kindness and love they bestow on Ram, in his last days when becomes an invalid. This definitely acts as an eye-opener for Ram, in return of his lustful love, Mona and Rose shows him the unconditional or true love. The realisation on the part of women and their consequent evolution into more mature characters best illustrates the theory of Emotional Intelligence. Self awareness leading to understanding of one's own emotions and generating favourable emotions in people related to one's life. Towards the fag end of his life Ram understands his mistakes and also helplessly accepts the forgiving love of his wives.

Rose, Wife of Ram

Rose the honest and bold wife of Ram is able to bring the desired changes in him because of her level of EI .But even she does not display this level of EI all the time. She fails to understand the emotions of her stepson Dev, her angry outburst and questioning makes him arrange goons to silence her unnecessary intrusions into his business dealings. Had she been tactful she would have made Dev understand his mistakes and lead a worthy life. This momentary lack of Emotional Intelligence takes away her life. Though Rose is a victim of culturally-sanctioned male oppression her protest and struggles to break the shackles are worth mentioning. Her murder has an alluding reference to the ancient practice of Sati. Despite their courage, intelligence and refusal "to bend knee" (RLU, 26) Sahgal's women continue to be victims.

Feminist Sahgal

Language in India www.languageinindia.com ISSN 1930-2940 13:10 October 2013

Tissaa Tony C., M.A., B.Ed., M.Phil.

Glimpses of Emotional Intelligence in *Rich Like Us*

In the portrayal of Sonali Ranade, we observe the feminist in Sahgal coming of age. *Rich Like Us* belongs to a more mature phase of Mrs. Sahgal's career. The women belonging to this phase are strong-willed and emotionally independent. They refuse to bow before the strange hold of men, right from the beginning. Sonali grows up with a dream to fulfil "a new tradition to create, her independent worth to prove" (Rich Like, 28), uncompromising she refuses the pretend that "the emperor's new clothes were beautiful" (28). Her resignation is not acceptance of defeat; it is rather her defiance against oppressive forces. It is her unique manner of asserting her individuality. The character of Sonali Ranade is that of a woman whose vision of self-assertion is not clouded by conventions. She knows not only what she wants but also how to achieve it. Sonali is indispensably a character who exhibits all the four traits of Emotional Intelligence like self awareness, understanding of one's own and other emotions, managing and generating emotions. In the due course of the novel we see her looking at herself and the pressures around her. But she decides her future with much clarity not losing her emotional balance, thereby testifying the success of Emotional Intelligence.

Not on Virtue or Vice

Rich Like Us is not a story where virtue is rewarded and vice is punished but one of glorification of courageous and good. Jasbir Jain observes that *Rich like Us* did not offer any easy solution to the problems of mankind and instead it challenges all the known solution. It is about the complex nature of reality. Mrs. Sahgal seeks to find solution for monumental problems in the man woman relationship. She regrets that in this atomic age there is no research to resolve problems arising out of human relationship. She therefore pleads for the new marital morality based on mutual trust, consideration, generosity and absence of pretences, selfishness and self-centredness.

Work Cited

Primary source

Sahgal, Nayantara. *Rich Like Us*. London: Heinemann. 1985. Print.

Secondary sources

Goleman, Daniel. *Emotional Intelligence*. Bantam Books. United States and Canada. 1995. Print.

Jain, Jasbir. *Goodbye to Realism. The Ending of Mistaken Identity. The New Indian Novel in English – A Study of the 1980s*. ed. Viney Kerbal Delhi. 1990. Print.

Mayer, J. D., Salovey, P., Caruso, D. R., & Sitarenios, G. *Measuring emotional intelligence with the MSCEIT V2.0*. *Emotion*, 3, 97-105. 2003. Print.

Mayer, J. D., Salovey, P., & Caruso, D. R. *Emotional Intelligence: Theory, findings, and Implications*. *Psychological Inquiry*. 15, 197-215. 2004. Print.

Internet sources

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rich_Like_Us

http://psych.utoronto.ca/users/reingold/courses/intelligence/cache/about_ei.htm

=====

Tissaa Tony C., M.A., B.Ed., M.Phil.
Assistant Professor
Kumaraguru College of Technology
Coimbatore 641 049
Tamilnadu
India
tissaatonyc@yahoo.com